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ROBERT COLLYER

"TRUE AMERICAN TYPES"

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AUGUSTUS CONANT

ILLINOIS PIONEER AND PREACHER

VOLUME II. OF

"TRUE AMERICAN TYPES"
SERIES

AUGUSTUS CONANT

ILLINOIS PIONEER AND PREACHER

BY

ROBERT COLLYER

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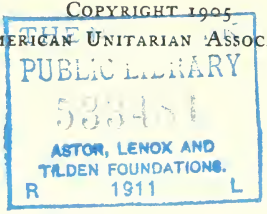

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AUGUSTUS CONANT

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AUGUSTUS CONANT

IN a curious little manuscript volume inscribed "Ebenezer Conant, his book, Ashburnham, Jan. 15, 1782," there is this introductory note: "This book was made by my dear father, Ebenezer Conant, who died on the 3d of August, 1783," and then these words about the Conant family: "I, John Conant, was born in Ashburnham, Mass., Feb. 2, 1773. My father's name was Ebenezer Conant; he was born in Concord, Mass., Aug. 12, 1743. His father's name was also Ebenezer Conant, and he was born in Beverly, Mass., Dec. 1, 1700.

His father's name was Roger Conant, who came to America with a colony, about 1623, and settled near to Marblehead or Salem, and I have understood that he was the son of a man who lived in France when the persecution raged there against the Huguenots; was a Huguenot himself, and fled with one of his brothers, of whom altogether there were seven, to England, there to enjoy their religion in freedom and peace."

The manuscript from which I have made this extract, seems to have been written jointly by Ebenezer and John Conant, each contributing about one hundred pages of such matter as was to him of vital moment. The contributions of the father are theological, those of the

son autobiographical, and are altogether of very little interest, except as they can throw a ray of light into the lives of these Conants of past generations, that may aid us to see better the Conant of this sketch. The theological works of the Grandfather Conant are :

1. "A Piece wrote upon some Jarring Sentiments among my Brethren about Predestination and Election."

2. "A Profession of Faith."

3. "A Letter to Mr. Lee."

4. "A Discourse on the Fall and Recovery of Man."

5. "Thoughts upon a Man's Spirit being generated with his Body."

6. "A Covenant."

7. "Thoughts upon the New Birth."

It touches one to read these things now, and to feel, as you read, that they must have come out of the heart of a man who was all on fire about them. Now they are as dead as the hand that trembled over the pages when they were penned. One or two things still have a spark of life left. Here is a sentence from the introduction to "Thoughts on a Man's Spirit being generated with his Body": "After a long travail of mind about what constitutes or makes up the man, I am now about to conclude, or indeed have concluded, that I have always been entirely mistaken about the whole matter." But this is almost the

only thing in the entire series of treatises that seems to have any life left in it; the valuable element they all hold, however, is the revelation they make of this Grandfather Conant so intensely interested in nice points in theology, while he was also striving to raise a large family on a small and poor farm. They were to him supreme questions of the life and soul. How he became so interested, John Conant, the son, will tell us presently. What Ebenezer, the father, tells us is that the keen, high-questioning, and dissenting spirit which had made his native France too hot for the old Huguenot Conant was back and busy again in the New England farmer.

"The first thing that I can re-

member," John Conant says, in his half of the book, "was, when two years and a half old, hearing the guns fire at the Concord fight; then, when I was seven years old, came the dark days of May 20, 1780, when the people ran about in great terror, believing that the end of the world had come. I remember holding on to my mother, because I felt sure I should be more safe with her than I could be with any other person. Then I remember how this dark day brought a great concern to my soul. I reflected very seriously on the awful condition I should be in if the world *should* come to an end. In the midst of these broodings, a Baptist preacher came to our town. The people mocked him

and hooted at him; but some, out of curiosity, went to hear him. Among others my father and mother went, and they came home pricked to the heart. Long before this, on the birth of their first child, they had joined the Congregational church by what is called the half-way covenant, so that they might have their children sprinkled. This mock baptism was performed on myself when I was only eight days old. Now they were dissatisfied with the half-way covenant religion, and followed the Baptist minister no longer from curiosity, but to obtain salvation."

The story of the life of this John Conant would be well worth telling for its own sake, if there were room

for it in this little book. The man was a noble specimen of that sturdy, capable, self-contained nature only found in its perfection in New England, determined always to get along in the world, to gather property and influence, but with a solemn religious element woven through and through the business faculty, — the sort of man most faithful, wherever he is found, in the support of schools, churches, and public libraries, the controlling element so far, thank God, in our American life; for what is popularly known as the Yankee is only the exception to this ruling man, the Yankee being only what is left when this religious element has rotted away, — a new New England man without a conscience or a present sense of God.

When John Conant stood by the death-bed of his father, he was only just turned ten years of age. But he says, " Being the eldest son, the sole management of our small farm, with what assistance my mother could render, fell on my shoulders; so my labors on the farm were very hard for a boy, and so incessant that I had very little time for books and learning. What small chance I had, however, I improved to the utmost, learnt to read and write, and arithmetic as far as the rule of three. These advantages were all I could ever command when I was a boy; but we always maintained our family worship, and as my father left a chest of carpenter's tools, my natural talent led me to use them to such advantage that

I soon became skilful in joiner's work. I got along so well in this that when I was seventeen, I built for my mother a saw-mill, and then, as I never did love farming, I began to work as a journeyman carpenter, and so at eighteen I found that I could hold my own with the good workmen in our town." After this he was promoted to be master of the inside work in the new Bolton meeting-house, but as he found the Bolton minister extremely stupid, he walked five miles every Sunday to hear a man who pleased him better.

In the fall of 1794 he got married, and then found it was time to be looking round for a larger place than the old homestead; so he headed a little party of four, and started for

what was then the wilderness of Western New York. There they bought land, cut a road through fifteen miles of brush to get at it, did not like the place at all when they came to see it, and so went back home. After this, being on a visit to Brandon, Vermont, he saw the Falls there, bought them on credit, returned home, removed the family at once, and went to work to build a dam. The result is in his own words: "With good health and courage, the Lord hath so prospered me ever since that time that I feel sure that I did my duty."

Here in Brandon John Conant found a feeble Baptist church, which he gathered into his house when the weather was cold, and when it was

warm into his shop; but in 1800 he wrote: "I myself, I say it with modesty, being the main man, with eleven others, built a meeting-house forty-feet by thirty-five, and there we worshipped thirty-nine years." In 1801 he was made justice of the peace; in 1806, clerk to the church; in 1809, he was chosen to represent the town in the Legislature; in 1815, was appointed by Government to assess the town for a direct tax; and was a member of that Electoral College for choosing a President which resulted in the choice of Harrison. In 1818 he was made deacon of his church, which office, he says, "I consider the most honorable and responsible ever conferred on me by mortal man." After this, he built a

dwelling-house, a stone mill, a seminary, some brick stores, and a grist-mill that cost eight thousand dollars. In 1843, when he was threescore and ten, John Conant felt a great longing, before he should die, to see the great West. He had a strange impression that he should never return home alive, but that did not matter; he felt he must go West. And so he made all ready, as a man going on a way whence he should not return, commended himself to God, and started for Rochester. After a happy visit with his children, who were settled in Rochester, he left for Buffalo, thence by steam to Cleveland, thence to Cincinnati, St. Louis, Galena, Mineral Point, Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Joseph, Detroit,

and then home again. "So mercifully was an old man of over seventy preserved in all this long and dangerous journey."

This is all that need be said about the Conant fore-elders, but this much I have felt I must say. Both Ebenezer and John Conant reveal a sound natural and spiritual life. They were closely knitted to our life as it is, were full of its deep sympathies and active duties. They did their share to plant, deep and strong, what to them were the very foundations of all true prosperity: religious convictions, and religious institutions. And so Ebenezer Conant, with his seven treatises, and John Conant, with his endless religious activities, are of the true stock of

this man whose life I mean to write, true spiritual as well as natural forefathers.

Augustus Hammond Conant was the only son of Ebenezer Conant — son of Ebenezer and younger brother of John — and Fanny Clifford, his wife, and was born in Brandon, Vermont, on the 16th of October, 1811. He went to school only as he could be spared from the farm his father had got in Brandon; but he made so good a use of his time that as he grew up he began to dream about a liberal education and a profession. But Ebenezer Conant, his father, thought there were too many professional men already; he feared, also, that a course of study

would unfit his son for the active duties of life; he preferred, also, that Augustus should be a farmer, and so, at last, it was settled that a farmer he should be.

When he was about nineteen, I find this bud of promise on the tree of his life: "July 14, 1830. I, Augustus Hammond Conant, do this day resolve to break myself of every evil practice, and to forsake every sin as revealed to me by the light of *reason*. So help me God!"

Is seems that a protracted meeting had been held during the previous winter in a neighbor's house; that the youth had gone there, and been touched by what he heard. He was stirred in this way to take a step toward joining some church; but he

was dissatisfied with Calvinism, had got a glimpse somewhere of the glorious doctrine of universal salvation, and wanted to see more of it. His sister reports a talk she had with him at this time, which gave her great uneasiness as to his orthodoxy. But during the next summer, declaring openly his doubts about eternal damnation, he offered himself for membership to the Baptist church in Pittsford, of which his parents were members, and was baptized and taken into full communion. In the winter following he taught school, in the summer again worked on the farm; altogether his life was opening into a quiet and gracious contentment; he grew in favor both with God and man.

The gold and silver mines of the far West in those days were the virgin prairies of Illinois, to which the attention of the East was just then especially directed. It was a weary way from the Green Mountains to the far West before the days of railroads; but then there was an adventurous tingle in the Conant blood. Had not Uncle John once cut his way through fifteen miles of wilderness? And there was money in Ebenezer Conant's locker, and friends and kinsfolk were scattered all the way westward from Brandon to Vandalia. So to the West young Conant determined to go, that, at least, he might spy out the land. He started in September, 1832, a month before he was twenty-one years old.

Of this journey the young man kept a brief journal that is interesting now for the quick glances at life it has preserved along the line of travel westward seventy years ago.

Starting from Whitehall, in the canal-boat " Missanic," Conant went by Fort Ann and Fort Miller to Saratoga. He was delighted with the valley of the Mohawk and its fine fertile soil, but was told that most of the farms were owned by Dutchmen; who would not sell a farm for money enough to cover it. Not a bad idea, one thinks, of the Dutchmen; because a farm for farming purposes should always be considered to be worth still more to the man who has it than to the man who wants it. At Schenectady he saw,

for the first time, a railroad, on which were two cars fastened together, and carrying from twenty to thirty passengers, all drawn by one horse at a speed of a mile in five minutes, — he was told. In one week from the time he left home, Conant had come to Rochester, and then to Buffalo, where he found friends and a fine city, that, he was told, had increased in wealth and population beyond estimate since the Grand Canal was opened.

From Buffalo, on the steamboat "Superior," he went to Detroit, and among the things which impressed him on his way there, he makes special mention of the greatness of Cleveland as a place of business, and he himself counted no less than

twelve schooners there besides canal-boats. So far the journey West had been an easy and a pleasant one; walking or riding, as suited him best, he had encountered no hardships and undergone little fatigue. But from Detroit to Chicago, and thence to the Mississippi, Conant adopted another programme; he determined to foot it. "Starting on the Monday from Detroit," he says, "over the worst roads I had ever seen, I went forward and westward on foot, and came that evening, footsore and very weary, to Saline, where I met a party of soldiers returning from the Indian war." Passing through a thick forest after this, and being very hungry and tired, he came at last to the house of a lonely settler, where he

rested, while the good backwoods woman made him eat some bread and milk and honey, for which he could not prevail on her to take any pay. On the Sunday he came to White Pigeon, where he attended meeting all day. On Monday to Niles, which he found quite a village, with four stores and two taverns, and here he rested three days, built a chimney, and taught a class of four young men stenography, by which he more than made expenses. Finally, refreshed, he started again westward, but being belated that night, he was lost in a swamp, where he plunged about for a long time, until at last, seeing a light at a distance, he hallooed as loud as he could, and was rescued by a boy

with a lantern. On the Sunday he came to Lake Michigan, and travelled thirty-five miles on its pleasant pebbly beach, and so at last, on Monday, the fifteenth day out from Detroit, he came to Chicago.

In the Chicago of 1832, however, Conant found nothing worth his notice except Fort Dearborn. He thought the town was so situated that it would eventually become a place of considerable importance; but, resting only an hour in Chicago, he started for the Fox River country. At the Dupage he found the little settlement rapidly recovering from the horrors of the Indian war.

Near the Bureau River, he lost his way, but found it again when night came on by the prairie fires

stretching for vast distances along the horizon. Stopping on the Sunday, after a walk of twenty-five miles, he went to a Methodist meeting, and there found such confusion and clamor as he had never witnessed before in the name of religion, in all his life. At Ellis's Mill, where he stopped next day, after walking only twenty miles, because it was twenty-five miles then to the next house, he found that the wolves in that region were fearfully troublesome, destroying the sheep and hogs so that it was hardly possible to keep any. In this wild country Conant again lost his way, and was most of all distressed because he could not see a single tree "any more than if he had been in the

middle of the Atlantic;" he found his way at last, however, after much wandering and some suffering, and so came finally, without any other adventure, to the Mississippi, crossing which river he landed at Keokuk Point, there to wait for a steamboat to the mouth of the Ohio. Taking a passage in the "William Wallace," he went down the river. On the steamboat, the heart of the wholesome, well-bred Vermont boy turned sick at the sight of slaves, and the clank of their chains. Helpless to do anything but fret, he could only turn for relief to the noble and beautiful scenery through which they were gliding. The beautiful islands covered with trees, and walled thick with grape-vines, dusk with

ripe fruit in the golden autumn sunshine, especially attracted him, and made him wonder at the fertility of this new land. At the mouth of the Ohio, he makes no mention of Cairo, but speaks of the noble trees there, — sycamore, cottonwood, elm, and myrtle. Starting then up the Ohio, and leaving the clank of the chains, he was still shocked by the reckless gambling that was carried on all day and all night long. Louisville he found wonderful for business, so crowded with steamboats that it was difficult to land. Cincinnati was a large and beautiful town, with a market reported to be equal to that of Philadelphia. At Parkersburg, then not much of a place, one of the firemen on the boat was

seized on the suspicion of his being a slave, but he had his papers with him, though it was believed on the boat that they would not have saved him from being sold down the river, had not the captain gone with him before the magistrate and pulled him through. At this the young Vermonter cries out in his diary, "I would not exchange the cold, rough hills of Vermont, uncontaminated as they are with the breath of slavery, for the finest country ever cultivated by the slave."

From Pittsburg, the wonder of all that his eyes had ever seen since he left home for elegance, grandeur, and business, he took the stage to Erie and found when he got there that the steamboat he had meant to take

had left; so he started on foot for Buffalo, forcing his way through great storms of rain and snow. And so on at last, very thankful in his heart, he came to his home among the cold, rough hills of Vermont, where such welcome waited the wanderer as we may guess, but are not told.

New England is a dear good place to be born in, a noble nursery of men, and her true sons can never forget their true mother; but the family was large, and the old homestead was limited, and so it came to pass at last that Eben Conant, with all his household, determined to move on in the track of the sun. The young man's report of the good

land in Illinois had created a family revolution.

The right spot was found on the Desplaine River about twenty miles northwest of Chicago. The country there is low and flat, but very fertile and easy to farm. The land then was just as the Indians had left it, and was not even surveyed; but there was plenty of wood on it, and wild game and fish. A rising city lay within a day's journey, ready to take everything that could be raised, and pay cash for it, and to supply everything that was needed in return; and altogether the undertaking was full of encouragement to a prudent and enterprising man.

Augustus Conant, who went at once on land of his own, kept a

journal of his career as a frontier farmer, from the first of January, 1836, to the middle of May, 1840. It is a brief and terse record of what was done, as real in its own way as the work he was doing, and as simple and modest as the man. He seldom spares more than one line for one day, and sometimes writes that in shorthand; never makes a reflection, or chronicles a mood; says a good deal about the weather, but it is mainly about clear and sunny weather, — a delicate intimation, one cannot but feel, of the weather that then and always prevailed in the man's own soul. Beyond this turn for seeing in almost every day a *sun* day, however, nothing can be more constant and true to the hard, bare

facts of the frontier life than this journal; yet as you read on line by line, the index at last opens the book of his life to you, and you are aware of a certain power and pathos in the brief, downright chronicles that are not often found in more leisurely and scholarly journalizing. Still it would not be well to print the record line by line as it stands in this little book. Most of it could have no interest to the reader now. And so, taking the first dozen entries just as they stand, as a specimen of the whole, I will then make such extracts as I hope will preserve the essential spirit of the entire work.

"1836, *Jan.* 1. Attended to the survey of my claim.

"2. Drew rails.

"3. Sunday. Wrote poetry.

"4. Made shelves and split rails.

"5. Went to Chicago with a load of potatoes.

"6. Sold my potatoes for seventy-five cents a bushel.

"7. Cut apples, worked at my house, husked corn.

"8. Attended a meeting of settlers for securing to each man his present claim.

"9. Cut rail timber.

"10. Sunday. Went to Chicago.

"11. Commenced thrashing.

"12. Still thrashing."

This is the literal side of the young man's daily prayer for daily bread, the common level God had ordained he should keep, with now and then a glimpse into deeper and higher things,

that he tries at first to turn into "a song," but at last into "a sermon."

With the spring came more important enterprises.

"*May* 10. Mrs. Hoard and Betsy Kelsey arrived.

"11. Planted corn and prepared for the wedding.

"12. Married Betsy Kelsey. *Weather very fine and sunny.*

"*June* 3. Made a table, and borrowed six bushels of potatoes, to be paid back with interest in the fall.

"4. Wife eighteen to-day. Made a few articles of furniture.

—— "Read 'Paley's Natural Theology.'

—— "Meeting at my house. Mr. Kent preached again.

—— "Made a churn.

"*Sept.* 28. Heard big wolves howling.

—— " Hunted deer.

—— " Worked at shoemaking.

—— " Made a coffin for H. Dougherty.

—— " Plastered my house.

—— " Dressed pig and calves torn by wolves. Dug a well.

—— " Killed a wolf.

—— " Corn half destroyed by blackbirds.

—— " Set out shade-trees. Read Cowper.

—— " Took up a bee tree to hive for honey.

—— " Hunted deer. Snow a foot deep.

—— " Hunted a panther. Went to a bridge-raising.

"1838, *Feb.* 18. Meeting at my house. I read a sermon.

—— "Began to read the 'Western Messenger.' Made a back kitchen.

—— "Hewed timber for a barn.

—— "Made a wagon.

—— "Made a cheese-press.

—— "Unwell, and so studied algebra.

—— "Made a sun-dial.

"*Sept.* 16. Went to Miller's to read Channing. Read at the meeting Channing on 'Self-denial.'

—— "Unwell, so wrote temperance address.

—— "Temperance meeting; delivered my address.

—— "Read 'Statement of Reasons.' Circulated subscription-paper for a school. Mended boots.

"1839, *Jan.* 19. Sat on jury.

—— "Began to distribute tracts. Helped to make a post-office.

"*May* 12. Read 'Bancroft's Sermons.'

"*June* 29. Agreed to deliver an oration.

"*July* 4th. Delivered my oration.

"*July* 7th. Attended meeting in Chicago, and became acquainted with Mr. Hosmer, Mrs. Clarke, and Mrs. Gale.

"13. Got my oration published, and paid for.

"14. Attended Mr. Hosmer's meeting again.

"*Oct.* 20. Wrote a sermon from Matt. vi. 9, 27.

—— "Wrote another sermon.

"1840, *Jan.* 4th. Preached at McHenry.

"*Feb.* 1. Wrote a funeral sermon.

"25. Preached at Geneva.

—— "Read Norton on the Trinity.

—— "Made soap. Boiled sugar.

—— "Wrote a sermon on the Aim of Life.

"*April* 5. Preached at Geneva.

"*May* 25. Started for New England, to attend the Divinity School in Cambridge."

These extracts need no comment; they speak for themselves. I have printed them as they stand in the journal, because it seems most natural to let the words tell their own tale in their own way. There are only brief hints of the struggles through which he had to pass, before it became clear to himself and those

most interested in his movements that he must give up every plan he had projected so far on the ground that he was to be a farmer, and give up the farm itself, with its cherished independence, because he was "separated into the gospel of God."

Two things besides the tendency in his own nature and what naturally came of it, such as going to Miller's to read Channing, "quickened this movement." The Fourth of July oration delivered to his own friends and neighbors on the Desplaine turned out to be more than his hearers had expected. Instead of reciting the comfortable old doctrine common to the occasion, that there was no such freedom, or virtue, or valor as ours on the earth, the young

man got a hard grip on slavery, held it up in the face of the July sun, just as it was, went on to show that such a virtue as that was filthy rags, and that the only valor worth the name was that which dared say so, and take open ground against the old rank lie. The consequence came instantly. Conant was denounced, reviled, and invited to eat his words. Instead of doing that, he went to Chicago, and got the oration printed at his own expense, sent it flying broadcast over the settlement, and so became known at once as one of the champions for freedom in that part of the country. But before this, as the journal tells us, he had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Clarke, the mother of Rev. James

Freeman Clarke. Of this meeting Mrs. Clarke wrote: —

"I remember Mr. Conant, how he came into my son's store (in Chicago) to make some purchases, and while standing at the counter took up the 'Western Messenger,' was so interested in it that he forgot everything besides until he had read it through, and then asked my son to lend him all that he could spare to take home. After this, when Dr. Hosmer came up from Buffalo to preach for us, Mr. Conant came in to hear him. I saw his face as I went in to meeting, and it seemed illuminated with the feelings that filled his heart; I introduced him to the preacher after service, and the result was that Dr. Hosmer advised him to go East and

study for the ministry; offered to write to Dr. Ware about receiving him, and to the Unitarian Association to help him. 'No,' said the young man, 'I thank you, but I had rather not begin by begging. I will sell my crops, take orders for payment on Vermont, and then take my wife and two children to live there with their folks, while I am studying in Cambridge.'

"From that time he began to prepare for his new life, rose very early every morning and studied till it was time to begin work on his farm, and whenever, besides, he could get a spare moment, and then in the spring he sold his crops, and started with his family for Vermont. But when he arrived there, he could not get his

checks cashed, and so feared that, after all, he would be compelled to give up his plan. He wrote me about his trouble, and that he was determined to go to Cambridge, see Dr. Ware, and lay the matter before him. He lost his way in going, and began to feel that it could not be the divine intention he should study for the ministry. He arrived at last, however, and began to tell the Doctor why it was now impossible he should come to school, as he had no money ; but the Doctor said, ' I have a letter for you, perhaps that may help you.' On opening the letter, it was found to contain an enclosure of fifty dollars from a gentleman who had heard of Mr. Conant's efforts to get an education, together with the

assurance that more should be forthcoming if needed, and thus the way opened at once to his entrance on the course of study."

"1840, *June* 25. Commenced study under the direction of Prof. Henry Ware, Jr., and took room No. 40, Divinity Hall. Attended Ware's evening discussion.

"*July* 4. Attended the celebration in Boston, and visited Bunker Hill.

"*Sunday, Aug.* 9. United with Mr. Gray's church in Bulfinch Street.

"*Dec.* 7. Received for sawing wood three dollars.

"1841, *May* 19. Read a report before the Philanthropic Society of the Divinity School on Western Missions.

"*June* 8. Was approved by the Cambridge Association as a minister of the gospel.

"*June* 27. Received ordination as an evangelist in Boston.

"From H. J. Huidekoper fifty dollars to purchase books, and from the Divinity School the works of Dugald Stewart.

"*June* 29. Left Cambridge.

"*July* 23. Reached Chicago."

This is the entire journal of the year at Cambridge as a student. Other notices of the time are not numerous, for a great body of closely-written notes of lectures and other college work of that sort still remaining must have taken up whatever spare time he had to spare after

the direct book-work for the day was done. Indeed, this appears from the few letters that still exist of this year. Informing his wife, to whom of course the first is written, that he had procured paper of the very largest size, so that he might be able to write a great deal for one postage, he writes his letter over and across, close and compacted, in about a week from the time he begins with "Dearest," telling here and there, as he goes on, how tired he is to-night, or how late it is; but then how writing a bit more will refresh him better than his sleep.

It is evident that the year altogether was one of the very pleasantest in his whole life. It introduced the young farmer to a new world.

The society about him was full of power to help him. He rushed to hear the great preachers of the era; and tells how "To-day I heard Mr. Putnam; he preached one of the very best sermons I ever heard in my life." Then again, "I have been to hear Dr. Beecher; there must have been a thousand people present. I could agree heartily with the most of what he said; he is rather a hard-featured old fellow, 'awful powerful,' as the Hoosiers say, and I thought if his pulpit cushions are not well stuffed, I should not like to lend him my fists to preach with."

And then he would not be a mere listener, but together with a fellow-student went to the House of Correction and prayed and labored with

the inmates whenever there was opportunity; prepared and read his address on Western Missions; gave addresses on Temperance here and there, and got some chances to preach besides in the churches.

But it was hard work all through. "If Professor Ware did not encourage me to believe that I am doing very well," he writes, "I should be ready to give up in despair. It is so hard to teach an old dog new tricks." But, as we have seen by the journal, the year came to an end at last. The masters were satisfied and the longing of his soul was fulfilled in his ordination to the work of an evangelist.

The centre of the work Conant was destined to do in the West was

the then very small settlement of Geneva, on the Fox River. He went there to preach in 1839 while still a farmer. The friends who heard him still remember his first appearance; they supposed he was a new settler come in to borrow a few bushels of corn, or to make a trade. It was a welcome surprise to find that he had come not to get bread from them, but to bring them the bread of life.

He was quaintly dressed, they say, and did not promise much at the first glance, but when he had once preached to them, they felt it was all right, recognized the fine soul under the queer garb, made him welcome with all their hearts, and invited him to come again; and so,

when he came back from Cambridge, it was the most natural thing in the world that he should be their minister and settle among them for good. It was at once the need of the place and the wish of the man, however, that he should come as a missionary, not to Geneva only, but to the whole country round about; that was what he wanted to do, what his heart bounded at, for it was his meat and drink, and psalm and prayer, and faith and hope, that he might go far and wide, bearing the gospel of peace.

Still, in Geneva, where the work was to find its natural centre, there was hesitation, difficulty, and doubt. Conant began to preach there on the 1st of August, 1841, but on

the 8th of May, 1842, he writes, "We had our first meeting to-day on the subject of forming a religious society in Geneva, but there was a doubt as to whether the right time had come to begin, and a declaration of principles that had been circulated and signed by twenty persons was reserved for further consideration." A month after this, however, the new society was organized as the first Christian society of Geneva. Then it soon began to be clear that they must have a meeting-house. The school-house in which they met was a very poor place, not easy to come at, not easy to warm in winter, and to meet there was like flying with a broken wing; the church was built in the hearts of the little band of

worshippers first, and then the stone and lime and lumber followed, as the effect a cause.

Conant left journals of these years in great profusion. They are far too ample to be printed in this small volume, but I will give such parts of them as tell his story, better than I could tell it, only drawing the lines he himself has drawn, by giving first, from one journal, what will show how his life went on in Geneva, while he held, as it were, the pioneer's axe in one hand and the Bible in the other, doing a man's work with both; and then later some account of his work as a missionary: —

"1842, *Jan.* 7. Removed to Geneva. Wrote a sermon, and made a door.

—— " Repaired our room. Worked at a sermon. Doctored sore eyes.

—— " Raised the house frame.

—— " Cut and drew ice, and made curtain rods.

—— " Made a plan of a sermon on the prodigal son, a pair of quilting frames, and an argument at the Lyceum against capital punishment.

—— " Read Neander. Made a chair.

—— " Worked on a sermon. Made a partition for the stable.

—— " Worked on a sermon, and drew wood. Snow two feet deep.

—— " Commenced a sermon, and worked in the woods.

—— " Doctored sick horse. Cut wood.

—— " Read Neander. Horse died.

——"Read Neander. Mended a pump.

——"Wrote on a sermon, read Neander, and made a wheelbarrow.

——"Began a sermon. Planted potatoes.

——"Wrote a sermon on Episcopacy. Built an ice-house.

——"Read the Methodist Discipline. Helped my wife to wash.

——"Planted potatoes. Wrote a sermon on Unitarianism.

——"Worked on a sermon.

——"Made benches for the school.

——"Finished sermon, and haying.

——"Set out plum-trees. Planned a sermon.

——"Made a gravel walk. Wrote at a sermon.

——" Papered my study.

——" Wrote at a sermon.

——" Planted seventy peach-trees.

——" Finished sermon. Made soap.

——" Wrote at a sermon.

——" Made window-frames for Richard Moore.

——" Planted onions. Planned a sermon.

——" Made a bedstead for the cobbler.

" 1849, *Nov.* 12. Went to Elgin with father, to build a cupola for the church.

" 22. Worked at cupola.

" 23. Raised cupola.

" 24. Hung the bell.

" 25. Preached in the church.

" 26. Finished the cupola, and went home.

—— " Wrote a sermon. Repaired a wagon.

—— " Read Milman. Planted raspberries.

—— " Wrote a sermon. Plastered the cellar-floor.

—— " Read Macaulay. Made candles.

" 1850, *Sept.* 12. Railroad train came into Geneva for the first time."

This is the plan of what may be called the journal of a working man. The record stretches from Jan. 1, 1842, to Dec. 6, 1853, and then ends. There would be no additional interest in printing the whole; what is given here is a fair sample, and is far too characteristic of the man to be omitted; and I think we cannot

afford to lose this revelation of the way in which all things worked together about the little parsonage when the parson could be at his post. Soap and sermons, the Methodist Discipline and washing-day, Episcopacy and an ice-house, Macaulay and candles, Neander and a wheelbarrow, the study and the stable, a course of lectures on the sects and a bedstead for the lame cobbler, — a journal like this is only possible of the life of a man as honest as he was, and in earnest, living on the frontier, and capable of turning his hand to anything. There are, of course, many days in which the work done is altogether secular, when the man is out of doors hammering away at something from day-

light till dark. Then he is whole days in the study with his books and at his desk. Now he is in the fields and woods, and then in the garden and the workshop. But what the journal never yields in these twelve years is a single line to tell of a single moment devoted to dismal speculations about the universe, or to grumbling because things did not go as well as the writer expected. There is no sign of a blue Monday, or a feverish Saturday. I sit with this journal of days' works before me, written with the most abominable ink (home made, I guess), and there still seems to be a voice crying out of the homely old book to the recording angel, "Write, for these things are faithful and true." They

are better than the writer ever seems to guess ; the hand that is writing is only half conscious of what it writes about ; the right hand does *not* know what the left hand doeth.

The field stretching away from Geneva was ample enough for a host of missionaries, who should have no other work to do but go out and preach the gospel to every creature. How he did go out, and what came of his apostolic journeys, his journal must again inform us, but only by its essence and spirit, by the extract, if it can be made, of his whole missionary life. It was a threefold cord which cannot be broken, but as the strands of it are so different in their nature, I have thought it would be most instructive to look at each

strand separately, point out its quality, and then let the whole strong cable by which this man was so fastened to his fellow-men, and to God, abide in its simple and beautiful perfection.

"1841, *Sept.* 5. Commenced preaching in Geneva on my return from Cambridge. From the 20th to the 28th made a journey to the North-West, preaching at Rockford, Oregon City, and Belvidere.

"*Oct.* 14. Went to Joliet, preached four sermons, and visited the people.

"*Nov.* 10. Preached at Blackberry. Met some "Christian" preachers there, and arranged with them to unite our labors.

"*Nov.* 14. Went to Joliet, but met with only poor encouragement.

"*Nov.* 21. Preached at Blackberry, where I baptized my wife and Fayette Churchill.

"*Dec.* 24 *to the end of the year.* Went into Wisconsin Territory, preaching at Burlington, Spring Prairie, Gardiner's Prairie, Rochester, and Montalana.

"1842, *Jan.* 3. Attended Quarterly Conference at Montalana.

"16. Preached at Rock Creek.

"30. Preached at Batavia. Found great prejudice about us there.

"*Feb.* 26. Preached at St. Charles in the new Universalist meeting-house to a good audience.

"*April* 3. Attended Christian Conference at Rhillbuck Creek.

"10. Preached at Sugar Grove.

"14 *to* 20. Went into Wisconsin, preaching as I found opportunity.

"*Aug.* 1. One year since I returned from Cambridge. During the year I find I have travelled as a missionary 1,844 miles, distributed 150 volumes of books and 1,000 tracts.

"1843, *Jan.* 17. Lectured at Naperville on the Evidences of Christianity, and the Causes of Modern Unbelief.

"*March* 1. Lectured at Batavia on the Trinity.

"*Mar.* 28 *to April* 5. Went into Wisconsin, preaching in Burlington, then in McHenry. Found great interest in our ideas."

So runs the record of his missionary life to the end. From about this

time to June, 1845, he went regularly to Belvidere, and made that a second parish, but at last found that the distance was too great to permit him to go on with his pastorship there, so that the work had to be taken up by another man. Then he preached regularly in Elgin for a long while, making that a second parish, — going also to Joliet, Belvidere, and many other places with his word of life and tracts and books.

On the 19th of January, 1843, he was able to open his new meeting-house in Elgin, toward which he had given two hundred dollars of the money raised in New England, when he was there, and Elgin rose to the dignity of providing him a "*regular*" salary of from one hundred and

twenty-five dollars to one hundred and fifty dollars per annum for one service each Sunday. In the June of this year he was in Indiana, preaching and distributing books without stint. At Cole Creek in this journey he met a Christian elder, James McKinney, who told him that he had the highest salary of any man of their denomination about there; for whereas the rest did not average more than twenty-five dollars a year, he had twenty-nine dollars and thirty-nine cents.

But soon after this our young apostle began to feel that there was a limit even to his endurance. Out in all weathers where as yet railroads were below the Eastern horizon, taking the pot-luck of the frontiers as to

his food, and his chance as to sleeping whenever he wandered away from the cosey parsonage in Geneva, with all the work of heart and brain which he had to do, and with a constant anxiety about some of his missionary stations — all this at last broke him down, so that for a while he could only attend to his two widely separated parishes of Geneva and Elgin.

I will not interfere with Conant's own account of the termination of his ministry as it is written in his journal.

"*June* 20, 1857. I have passed through many trials as a Christian minister, some of the severest growing out of my preaching against slavery in opposition to the prejudices and wishes of a portion of the

society. The disaffection has been so great that the congregation has been considerably diminished, and my hopes of usefulness in Geneva greatly reduced. Old and leading members of the society have expressed so much dislike to anti-slavery preaching, and I became so much disheartened, that some three months ago I promised them if the condition of this society did not assume a more favorable aspect in six months, I would resign my pulpit.

"On the 10th instant I received, quite unexpectedly, a unanimous call to become pastor of the Unitarian society in Rockford, and have accepted the same, and expect to close my connection with this society the first Sunday in July. For sixteen

years, wanting three Sabbaths, I have been preaching in Geneva, and have formed many tender ties. But it seems to me now a clear case of duty to leave them, and most fervently do I commend them to the favor of God."

So, on Sunday the 12th July, 1857, Conant, going to Rockford, preached there his first sermon as pastor of the church to a congregation of about seventy. And the prospects of the society opened well; in possession of a beautiful place for worship, with members in the church not to be surpassed by any, within the knowledge of the writer, in any church, and with a strong desire to go onward and do good, the people received their new minister with the warmest welcome.

Very soon eleven new members were added to the church; on the first Sunday in April, 1858, twenty more; on the 30th of May, ten more. There was a constant ripple of revival in the best and most living interests of the congregation. Things were got into good order, a Sunday-school society formed to take care of the Sunday-school, and other societies as they were needed to oversee other interests, and everything was bright with promise.

But the tree was too old to transplant. It began to be felt, after perhaps two years, that there was dearth and drought in the movement, that things were not prosperous. "It is rather a cold, dull time," he says, sadly, "and I feel at times greatly

depressed, almost discouraged. I seem to accomplish nothing, and feel sometimes that I am not fit for a minister; and if I could do it with a clear conscience, I would gladly return to the plough. I know I ought to brace up like a man; but I do get soul-heavy sometimes, and feel like saying Die."

It was not long after this that a cannon-shot struck the ark of the covenant at Fort Sumter, and brought the West to her feet in a mighty passion of indignation and tears. Then the hymns given out to be sung in my own church were, "When Israel of the Lord beloved," and "My country, 't is of thee;" and the text for the sermon was, "Jesus said,

'But now . . . he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.'" And the anthem was "The Star-Spangled Banner," and the altar-cloth was the flag that the true man determined to defend. The appeal was to the Lord of Hosts.

In July, 1861, Conant was commissioned chaplain of the 19th Illinois regiment, under the command of Colonel Turchin. On the 2d of August he writes to his wife from the steamboat "Empress," off Cape Girardeau, how he is rejoicing in the thought that, with a thousand young men for his parish and congregation he may be able to do quite as much for the moral and spiritual elevation of man as he had done at Rockford. "If it is best," he continues, "that

I should live and work in this way *for a few years* until the war is over, I shall feel secure in the divine protection; but if it is the will of God that I should finish my course in the cause of freedom and humanity, I hope, dear wife, you will accept that termination to my life as the best, trusting in the wisdom and love of our Father."

So the good man came in this spirit to the last work he was to do, as cheerful, hearty, and hopeful as he was when he had written what bright days they were twenty-five years before at his wedding. "I am well," he says, "as ever I was, sleep soundly on the soft side of a plank, and ready for whatever may come."

His home letters tell the story of his army life.

Sunday Evening, Sept. 28.

You know, dearest, how down-spirited I have usually been after my day's work on Sunday. I have been thinking over my experiences this evening, and, strange to say, for the result of a Sunday evening meditation, I have come to a cheerful conclusion. I do not think, on the whole, that I am much, if any, more discontented here in the army than I sometimes felt in Geneva or in Rockford. Men did not do as I wanted to have them there, and it is the same here; I had times of feeling that I was laboring in vain, and I have such times here. But really I am perhaps doing as much good as ever I did, or as ever I shall do, and gratitude for my opportunities and means of usefulness is quite as befitting as grumbling and discontent

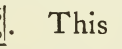
with my condition and work. I think, on the whole, that I have done a fair day's work, and that I may hope for God's blessing on his word of truth. The men seemed (when I preached to-day) attentive, interested, and grateful. I hope the seed sown will take root and bear good fruit. I should be glad to be with you, but as it does not seem the way and will of Divine Providence, I will try to be contented and happy where I am. It used to trouble me that my salary and support seemed a burden to my people, but this trouble while I am here is at an end. My pay comes without grudging and without stint; it is a little delayed sometimes, but there is no fear of failure in the end. I have rest from hard study, and from the task of writing a weekly sermon whether inspired or not inspired with a word of truth from God for humanity. The *rest* is, in fact, in

excess, and I would like a little communion with my library; but I have rocks and trees and clouds and living men to read, and can get from them precious lessons, if I am an attentive student. It does seem as though with all these things, and good health and good rations, a man ought to be happy, and might enjoy himself, if he had a mind to. I suspect having a mind to is the chief thing in the business. I mean to try to have a mind to and to have a heart to enjoy the good gifts of the bountiful Provider for human want and welfare. Then, more than all these, I have loved and loving ones at home, who, I hope, are bravely doing their duty in this hour of trial and peril to our nation. I can talk with honest pride of my sons in the army of freedom, and of my heroic wife and daughter and mother at home, taking care of themselves and of the little one who bears an honored name.

Ah! in having such home treasures I am rich, and may well rejoice. It will not seem long after it is past, this time of separation, though counting the days as they pass one by one, with no tidings from home for weeks, it does seem rather long and wearisome and lonely; but we will hope that the future has ample amends in store for us.

ELIZABETH, Ky. Nov. 2d.

I suppose you think of us in the cold November rain, camped in a tent, as in a very miserable condition. Let me describe some of our inconveniences and sufferings, that you may know just how to pity us. Day before yesterday we made rather a blazing fire in our tent, and our barrel-built chimney outside took fire, and blazed away finely for a few minutes; but the water-pail afforded a sufficient fountain and the dipper an adequate engine for extinguishing

the flames, and to prevent a general conflagration from a similar accident in the future, we constructed a chimney yesterday morning of turf, and surmounted that with the barrels, obtaining in this way both safety from fire, and a good draught. In the afternoon we went to the tin-shop in town, and got a piece of sheet-iron about a yard square, and had a hole cut in the middle of it, over which we can put a kettle or frying-pan for cooking, and a small hole in each of the four corners through which to drive pins to fasten it in place, looking about so fashion,  . This we placed over the trench leading into our chimney, and behold, we have a cook-stove. Fire-places in tents we now regard as quite out of fashion; nothing but a *stove* is in any degree decent or tolerable. Before we got it quite done, it began to rain, but we had a good

pile of wood in our tent, and as we sat over our stove dry and warm, while the storm raged without, you can perhaps picture in imagination "*our sufferings*." When supper-time came, we stirred up some Indian meal with an egg and due proportions of soda, tartaric acid, sugar, salt, and water, and putting our little bake kettle upon the stove, we put in it a large basin containing the prepared materials, and covered the top with coals, and in a few minutes after, as we lifted the cover and looked in, behold a johnny-cake light as a sponge, and done to perfection. We had syrup made from melted sugar, and fresh butter, and a good cup of black tea, and thus wretchedly provided, and with a keen appetite, you can imagine how we did suffer. Then, as to lodgings, we levelled the pile of straw under the blanket, and placed our well-filled straw tick upon it, with our feet toward the stove,

and a load of blankets and overcoat, and outside of all an india-rubber. After our usual evening worship we crawled into as warm and soft a bed as if at home, and heard the storm roaring without and the rain driving against our tent, while all was dry and comfortable within.

Camp Lincoln, Elizabethtown, Ky.,
November 18.

I obtained yesterday the use of the Baptist meeting-house in Elizabethtown in the afternoon for our regiment to meet in, and had a good many citizens besides. It happened that I had a sermon on the war, in which I expressed my views pretty freely on the way it had been, and the way it ought to be, conducted, particularly on the confiscation of the slave property of rebels and the emancipation in the rebellious States. It happened, also, that most of my audience, except our regiment, were

slave-holders, and probably a majority were in sympathy with secession. For once in their lives they had an opportunity to hear a little plain preaching on the subject of slavery, and I had an opportunity to preach without hindrance, or fear of molestation, to slave-holders in a slave State. The good deacon of the church and his wife, who are slave-holders, but Unionists, were evidently sore alarmed, and a good deal troubled about the effect of the sermon on their secession neighbors, but I hope a little wholesome truth will do them no lasting injury.

(*To his Wife.*)

CAMP JEFFERSON, BACON CREEK, KY.,
January 1, 1862.

One of the pleasant recollections that came to me this morning was the circumstance that on the 1st of January, 1836, I wrote a letter from

the Desplaine River, in Illinois, to Betsy M. Kelsey in Brandon, Vermont. God be thanked for the happiness of that day and year, and for all the joy of which it was the prelude. How much of domestic enjoyment has been my experience, and hope I may say yours, also, in these twenty-six years of life! The recollection is just occasion of gratitude and fit inspiration of a still purer and deeper love for each other; and yet our love has at no time seemed deficient in these qualities. God be thanked for the children he has given us, and for all their good qualities, their good behavior, their worth, and prospects of usefulness and happiness in life. Their worth and welfare is the multiplication of our enjoyments, and we have occasion of gratitude that they are doing so well.

AUGUSTUS CONANT

(*To his Son.*)

DECATUR, ALABAMA,
April 21.

I was sorry to hear of the death of Colonel Ellis, at Pittsburg Landing. It is a sad experience for his wife and little family. How many brave men have fallen in this struggle for freedom and constitutional law against slavery and self-will! But we have reason to hope that by this shedding of blood our nation will obtain redemption from the sin and curse of slavery and lawlessness, and the reward be greater than the sacrifice. If it should be my fortune to fall a victim, I know you would all grieve over it; but I hope you would also rejoice that I laid the offering of my life upon the altar of freedom and humanity, and fell for so good and noble a cause. Death must come to us all, and it may be esteemed fortunate if it come in such a

way as greatly to promote the welfare of mankind. I hope to live and return to you to enjoy long the results of a successful war for the maintenance of our government, and the best ideas of which it is significant; but if I should not, I hope you will always esteem it an honor that, in God's providence, I had a place among the hosts of martyrs to freedom.

(*To his Wife.*)

DECATUR, ALABAMA,
April 22, 1862.

It seems as though the chief hardship and suffering has not fallen to me in camp, but to you at home. While I have had little or no opportunity for the exercise of heroic virtues, you have had severe trials of courage, endurance, self-sacrifice, and won laurels quite as worthy of ambition as those of the brave defenders of freedom. It is not the place or

circumstance that constitutes essential greatness, but the true, noble, brave spirit, which meets and masters all. So you have been exhibiting and acquiring heroism at home; while in the camp and on the march, I have done little more than to look out for my own comfort and welfare.

(*To his Wife.*)

Dec. 21, 1862.

How I wish I could be with you to spend Christmas holidays, but it is no use to think of it with the enemy so near and a battle impending. If a battle should be fought, and I should not be on hand to care for the wounded and dying, I should feel guilty. I am busy enough. When I can do no more for the sick, I work for the well. One man comes to me with a new axe and a handle to fit in it. I have made the colonel, the adjutant, the major, and

myself each a writing-table, beside ever so many camp-stools and dinner-tables. When we came here, I found a stand and camp-stool among the stuff that I had made in Nashville. I supposed some one had put them on a baggage-wagon for me, and was thankfully carrying them off, but a colored man said he found them and carried them all the way from Nashville, six miles, on his head, so I allowed his claim; then he divided the plunder, giving me the stool. I feel dreadfully at times, saddened, sickened, and disgusted at the doings of war. But bad as it is, the injustice and oppression perpetrated for ages is worse; so if the war be needful to that justice, mercy, and truth which is the kingdom of God, we must fight till his kingdom come.

This was the tenor of our chaplain's life in camp, so long as he was

spared for the service; sick at heart sometimes at the things he saw about him, longing to get home again, if it were only for a day, to see the wife and children, and especially the little child he had never seen, that was born after he went to the war, and when the rest of his children had grown to be men and women. He never did see that little one in this world at all; it was baptized in the room where he lay dead, and the vase that held the baptismal water rested on his coffin; and then, not long after that, the child himself was taken by the angels to the arms of the father who had longed so to see and hold him on this earth.

AUGUSTUS CONANT

In the Hospital, on the Battle-Field,
Near Murfreesborough, Tenn.,
Jan. 2d, 1863.

Dear Wife, — We have been fighting three days nearly on the same ground, and the battle is not yet decided. I suppose you will hear of it, and feel anxious about our safety. I write to say that I am yet unharmed, and that I saw our dear son, Neroy, after the severest of the fight, in which his regiment was engaged the day before yesterday, about noon, and he was unhurt, also, though he had been in a hot battle, and, as Col. Marsh said, "had fought like a tiger." I took a cup of tea with him while the storm of battle was roaring like the seven thunders; his regiment had been so badly broken up and scattered that I do not think they were again brought into the hardest of the fighting, so I hope he is still safe. There was constant skirmishing, and our hospital, being

in rather a central position on the battle-field, was a good deal of the time between the two fires. Since I began writing, our skirmishers have been firing at the rebels; but now they have fallen back, and the rebels are about the hospital firing at them. We have over one hundred wounded men in the house, Federal and Confederates together, and both sides try not to hit the hospital. I worked all night till four o'clock in the morning night before last, bringing in the wounded from the battle-field, and while the ambulance was taking a load, I generally remained out in the woods or fields, building fires for the comfort of the poor fellows who were waiting to be taken in, and also hunting them up. While so employed, I was made a prisoner by a Confederate colonel, and my ambulance and assistants were also captured; but we told them what we were doing, so, after some parley, they concluded to

let us all go and keep about our work. Just now, as I wrote, the rebels were in the yard, — now, again, our own men are here, and the house jars and the windows rattle with the discharge of artillery close by us. We are surrounded with a wall of fire, and I can hear the balls sing and the shells burst as I write; but our work of mercy is our protection; we shall be hit only by accident. I need not dwell on this. I have often been impatient because I have had so little to do; but the opportunity to help those in need on this battle-field pays for all delays. You cannot imagine how much I have enjoyed for the last forty-eight hours in helping friend and foe. When captured, I made some of the Confederates help me to bring a wounded Ohio soldier to a fire, and as we clasped hands beneath him, I told him we would take one brotherly gripe, if we never did again. It was the best right hand of fellow-

ship I ever gave or received. Now I must hasten to my duties, and will write more when more at leisure, the good Lord willing.

Brigade Hospital, Battle-Field,
Near Murfreesborough, Tenn.,
Jan. 5th, 1863.

Dear Wife, — The storm of battle is at last over, and I have the happiness to inform you that Neroy and myself are still unharmed. I wrote you the day before yesterday, while the fight was going on, and we knew not which way the tide of battle would turn. Yesterday afternoon it was found that the Confederate army had returned from Murfreesborough, and at sunset we heard the distant roar of our artillery hurrying up their flying footsteps. I went to-night toward that part of the field where the 19th Regiment were camped to learn their condition, then returned to the hospital by way of the camp of the 74th

Illinois, and saw Neroy safe and well. Since I wrote you, I have been acting assistant surgeon, nurse, and messenger, and have felt that my opportunities of helping those in need have richly paid for all the delay and discontent of the past. I think I must set down the last night of the old year and the morning of the new, passed in the woods on the battle-field gathering up and bringing in the wounded men, as the grandest and happiest night of my life. I wanted to stay in Nashville and work in the hospital when our army left there, and tried to get a situation, and could not; made up my mind that something else was in store for me, and so it is turned out. I have been permitted to do more and better than I could hope.

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AUGUSTUS CONANT

(*From his Son.*)

At the Hospital, Battle-Field.
Near Murfreesborough, Tenn.
(No date.)

Dear Mother, — Before this I suppose you have received father's letter about his sickness, and are anxious to hear from him; his doctor says that he thinks he is doing very well. I am with him, and shall stay with him until he is well; he has a good place and as good care and nursing as I can give him. The doctors and nurses are very kind, and all try to do what they can for him. His disease is inflammation of the lungs, caught from overwork during the battle. I saw him a number of times as the battle went on, and tried to persuade him not to do so much; but he said he could not bear to see wounded soldiers suffer when he could help them. I am very thankful that I am where I can

do him good service. He seems to feel that he had done his duty faithfully to the full extent of his power.

In Hospital Jan. 28th 1863.

Dear Mother and Sister, — Father is improving slowly, and is able to sit up in a large rocking-chair, bolstered up with pillows; this position suits him better than any other. I have a little currant wine that I give him, which seems to help him quite as much as medicine. I hope as soon as he is able to travel that he can get a furlough and come home; they are sending sick and wounded soldiers home on furlough now; but you must not set your heart on his coming, because he does not much expect to get a furlough, and says that by the time he is well enough to go home he will be fit for duty; but that I *doubt*.

P. S. I have one wounded Confederate in my ward; he behaves

himself very well, and has just as good care and attention as any of our men. He would have frozen to death, but for father's care, on the battle field; as it was, he froze his feet badly. Father built him a fire, and gave him two or three blankets to keep him warm until he had time to come and fetch him away.

On the 6th he still seemed a little better, but had a feeling that he could not recover, and said to his son Neroy, his loving and tender nurse, "I shall not probably live; but I have no fear of death. I am ready and willing to go at any time God may call me, and, but for the pain of the separation from you and the dear ones at home, I should have no wish to live. But the good Father, who

watches over us all, will care for and protect you when I am gone."

On the afternoon of the 7th, he had a relapse, though without apparent cause and he sank back into unconsciousness at a quarter before one o'clock, " and having served his generation he fell on sleep."

" Many hearts," wrote a soldier in the hospital, " will be made sad when they hear that our chaplain has gone to his rest; many a fearless soldier's eye will grow wet when he hears that the brave and noble chaplain, who dared the dangers of Stone River, who never turned aside for bullet or shell, but, where balls flew thick and fast, sought out the wounded, and administered to their wants, is dead. Never, while I live,

can I forget him, as I saw him on the field, with his red flag suspended on a ramrod, marching fearlessly to the relief of the suffering; appearing to the wounded soldier like a ministering angel. I can never forget the night of the 31st December, when he labored all the long night seeking the wounded. I can hear his voice now, loud and clear, in the still air, crying, 'Any wounded here that need help?' And so he labored to the end, taking no rest. When we said, 'Chaplain, you must rest, or you will die,' he always replied, 'I cannot rest, boys, while you suffer; if I die, I will die helping you.'"